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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001233

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IIP/G/NEA-SA, NEA/PI; ABU DHABI FOR PAO, MEPI RO

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR MEDIA LAW SPEAKER TO WORK WITH YEMENI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY REGARDING A NEW PRESS LAW

REF: STATE 261067

SUMMARY: POST REQUESTS A MEDIA LAW SPEAKER TO WORK WITH YEMENI STAKEHOLDERS WITH REGARD TO THE DRAFTING OF A NEW PRINTED PRESS LAW. UNDER THE EXISTING LAW, JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED AND NEWSPAPERS SHUT DOWN FOR THE EXPRESSION OF THEIR VIEWS. CIVIL SOCIETY, JOURNALISTS, AND EVEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE ASKED FOR A NEW LAW. A DRAFT WAS QUICKLY DRAWN UP WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT EXTERNAL INPUT. AMONG THE OUTRAGE FROM JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY, THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. TO HELP FORGE A FAIR LAW IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER WITH PARTICIPATION FROM ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY. END SUMMARY.

1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION. SPEAKER WILL WORK WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRIES OF INFORMATION AND PLANNING AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, WITH THE YEMENI JOURNALIST SYNDICATE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING THE DRAFT OF A NEW, PROPOSED PRESS LAW.

2. TIME FRAME. BECAUSE THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING THE LAW HAS ALREADY BEGUN, POST WOULD APPRECIATE A SPEAKER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE PROGRAM DAYS, BEGINNING ON A SATURDAY (THE NORMAL WORK WEEK IN YEMEN IS SATURDAY TO WEDNESDAY. POST CAN ACCOMMODATE UP TO TEN PROGRAM DAYS, IF SPEAKER IS AVAILABLE.

3. PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM. 2004 WAS A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR THE YEMENI PRESS. SEVERAL JOURNALISTS WERE IMPRISONED AND SOME NEWSPAPERS WERE CLOSED DOWN BECAUSE OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF THE CURRENT PRINTED PRESS LAW. THERE HAS BEEN A CALL FROM CIVIL SOCIETY AND YEMENI JOURNALISTS TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES TO THE LAW TO ENSURE RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE PRESS. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDED BY DRAFTING NEW LEGISLATION, BUT THE DRAFT BEING CONSIDERED IS LITTLE DIFFERENT THAN THE EXISTING LAW. POST HAS BEEN ASKED BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TO HELP DEVELOP A FAIR LAW IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER. HE HAS ALSO ASKED US TO PROVIDE CASE LAW EXAMPLES FROM THE U.S. (SINCE THE U.S. HAS NO PRESS LAW) AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE IN DRAFTING THE NEW LAW. WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT, PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS (YEMENI JOURNALIST SYNDICATE) AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WILL HELP ENSURE THE TRANSPARENT DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE, FAIR PRESS LAW FOR YEMEN. THE SPEAKER WILL BE EXPECTED TO CONSULT SEPARATELY AND JOINTLY WITH THE STAKEHOLDERS. POST WILL ALSO PROGRAM A PUBLIC FORUM IN WHICH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WILL PARTICIPATE. THE SPEAKER'S VISIT WILL LIKELY GARNER CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION, FURTHERING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES IN THE COUNTRY AND REGION. SPEAKER PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS WILL ADDRESS MAJOR AREAS OF POST'S MPP, INCLUDING "DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES" AND "MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING".

4. AUDIENCE(S). WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (MOPIC), SPEAKER WILL BE WORKING DIRECTLY WITH THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION, HUSSEIN AL-AWADI, AND HIS LEGAL AND TECHNICAL STAFF. SPEAKER WILL ALSO BE WORKING DIRECTLY WITH THE HEAD OF THE YEMENI JOURNALIST SYNDICATE, MAHBOOB ALI, AND TECHNICAL STAFF MEMBERS ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE EXISTING PRESS LAW.

5. PROPOSED TOPICS AND NATURE OF EVENTS (E.G. LECTURE, WORKSHOP, ONE-ON-ONE MEETING, ETC.). SPECIFIC LOCATIONS ARE TO BE DETERMINED, BUT CONSULTATIONS WILL LIKELY TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, AT THE OFFICES OF THE YEMENI JOURNALISTS SYNDICATE, AND AT A PUBLIC FORUM IN SANA'A. TIME PERMITTING, POST WOULD LIKE TO PROGRAM LECTURES AT MAJOR YEMENI UNIVERSITIES IN AT LEAST SANA'A AND ADEN.

6. TYPE OR NAME OF SPECIALIST REQUIRED (E.G. ACADEMIC, JOURNALIST, ECONOMIST, ETC.). POST REQUESTS SOMEONE WELL VERSED IN U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA LAW AND WHO IS COMFORTABLE WORKING WITH HIGH-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

7. LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS. ARABIC LANGUAGE IS DESIRED, BUT POST WILL PROVIDE INTERPRETOR FOR ALL MEETINGS AND TRANSLATION AS NEEDED. POST WOULD APPRECIATE ADVANCE COPIES OF WORKING PAPERS FOR TRANSLATION.

8. REQUESTS FOR SUPPORTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC MATERIALS. TO BE DETERMINED.

9. POST CONTACT INFORMATION.

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110. FUNDING. POST PLANS TO USE I-BUCKS FOR FUNDING. FOR A FIVE-DAY PROGRAM, ALL ACTIVITIES WILL TAKE PLACE IN SANA'A. SHOULD ADDITIONAL PROGRAM DAYS BE AVAILABLE, UNIVERSITY VISITS WILL BE PLANNED FOR ADEN AND POSSIBLY TAIZ.

111. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. TO BE DETERMINED.

KRAJESKI